TFEO Strange Air Transcript

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SPEAKERS

Danny, Michael P. Greco, W. Keith Tims, Tony Martinez, Luke, Malcolm Smith, Chase

W. Keith Tims 00:04
[Pre-roll promo.]

W. Keith Tims 00:11
[Theme music: "Mockingbird" by David Mumford.] Hello, and welcome to The First Episode Of, a podcast about audio drama and the creative process. I'm W Keith Tims, audio drama producer and podcaster. In this show, I listen to the first episode of an audio drama, then have a discussion with the creators about their show their methods and struggles and successes. Today, we're discussing the first episode of Strange Air.

W. Keith Tims 01:16
A sci fi mystery story created by Tony Martinez and Michael P. Greco. Strange Air deals with the disappearance of Malcolm Smith, host of a paranormal radio call-in show, who one night completely vanished while on the air. 10 years later, his daughter Chase, a film student is making a documentary about Malcolm's disappearance and uncover secrets about her father's life she never knew. The show weaves recordings of Malcolm's on air discussions, with Chase's investigations, to explore themes of belief, faith, and coping with loss. Strange Air is part of the Fable and Folly network, and has completed two seasons in a self contained story. I spoke to Mike and Tony remotely from their homes in Los Angeles.

W. Keith Tims 02:02
Why don't each of you tell me something about yourselves in your backgrounds as artists or creators? Who would like to go first?

Tony Martinez 02:09
What do you think Mikey? Want to kick it off?

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

Michael P. Greco 02:11
Sure. So I actually Tony and I met here in Los Angeles years ago doing improv comedy. And then I went on to do voiceover, and write and perform sketches at Second City in Chicago, where I'm from, then came back out here. And I've actually worked on a couple of shows for wondery and done some announcing for some other podcasts. So it was familiar with the podcast world a little bit before we jumped in.

Tony Martinez 02:39
Mike is more the expert in all matters voice related.

W. Keith Tims 02:43
I was checking you out on IMDb, actually. And you got some nice credits up there. So.

Michael P. Greco 02:48
Thank you. Yeah, it's it's been it's been a very fun career. I gotta be honest.

W. Keith Tims 02:52
Tony, what about you? What's your background?

Tony Martinez 02:53
Well, I'm from New York, I went to film school there, I worked as a line producer for many years to make a living. And I was on the side, trying to express myself creatively by writing. And I had a lot of good luck. Initially, I sold a couple of scripts, and I had some options, which motivated me to move to LA. And at that point, writing became difficult. It wasn't fun anymore. And I decided I needed to make a living. So I became a talent agent representing actors for work in film and TV. And I've done that for about 20 years. But I've always been involved the writing process and my clients, literary projects and this sort of thing. And I, I've never stopped loving writing. And when the pandemic hit, Mike and I kind of got together and put together our mutual knowledge bases and came up with the idea of doing a scripted podcast together.

W. Keith Tims 03:43
I want to come back to how you guys got together. But I do want to follow up on something you said. Because this really speaks to the creative condition. What is it that made writing stop being fun for you?

Tony Martinez 03:53
Well, you know, it's nice to be paid to write. [Laughter.] There's nothing wrong with that. But at some point, you're doing work you're not proud of, work that is not coming from within. Yeah, you're trying to service other people. And what I was good I when I first started writing in LA professionally was doing rewrites and polishes on other people's scripts. And we're talking about independent films, not big studio films. And I call it the talking monkey syndrome. Which means here, Tony, we have a perfectly good script that should be made. But can you please do a rewrite and put in a talking monkey. [Laughter.] And what happens keep that that path leads to massive consumptions of alcohol.

Tony Martinez 04:42
and to me, you know, that's why as an agent, I always made a good living. I never had any issues there. And when I write on the side, it's just for fun, man. It's just a creative outlet after a long day, if it's an essay for myself, or a script or a book I'm working on, I mean, Keith, you write you wrote you write The Book of Constellations don't you?

W. Keith Tims 04:42
I believe it. [Laughter].

W. Keith Tims 05:04
I do. Yes.

Tony Martinez 05:05
So you know what it's like to create your own thing for you,

W. Keith Tims 05:08
Right. Writing from the heart, writing from someplace authentic, that really does feel very satisfying. And it may or may not sell. That's the other thing. But it does feel very satisfying. Exactly.

Tony Martinez 05:18
Well, you bring up a good point, Mike and I, when we first started talking about the podcast, to the one thing we both agreed on, we're not doing this for money. It doesn't have to sell it can run for 100 years without a single ad. I don't care. We're doing this for us.

W. Keith Tims 05:33
Michael, how do you feel about this question of writing for yourself versus writing for some sort of outside interest that maybe has a financial concern attached to it, things like that?

Michael P. Greco 05:44
Well, that it's an interesting point, to say, yes, not everything you write will feed your soul. I wrote some anime adaptations, which were fun, but didn't feed my soul in any way. But actually, one of the more fun jobs I ever had was writing jokes for Internet clip shows. That was a blast because I was sitting in a room with four or five other really, really funny people, two happen to be very good friends of mine. And for two or three hours, we were just watching internet clips and shout out the funniest thing we could think of. So that was the best gig ever, because you're getting paid to sit and laugh and make jokes. You know, the feeding your soul, at the end of the day is absolutely something every writer has to do. And yes, if you're getting paid, and it's, it's soul sucking. Okay, do the soul sucking thing for the money. And then on the side, do everything you can to feed your soul.

W. Keith Tims 06:35

So help me with the timeline here. You guys met each other. And then you kind of went away and did your own things for awhile, and then came back to LA?

Tony Martinez 06:42
Well, Mike, well, Mike and I met back in like, way too long to remember doing improvisational theater. But we've always been friends. I mean, we've always been in each other's lives. And so and we also live very close to each other. See, I was always a fan of audio dramas, I got hooked on shows like Limrtown and Rabbits and this sort of thing. And I was always fantasizing Wow, it'd be so much fun to do that. But it didn't seem like something I could do. It didn't seem accessible, because it was outside my knowledge base. So when the pandemic hit, it's like, I have a writing background. I know character. I know structure. Mike is a voiceover actor who knows a million experienced voice actors. He has a booth in his home, it suddenly became apparent to me like, hey, we could maybe try to do a podcast like a Black Tapes, like a Tannis, like Homecoming. And that was the initial spark, right, Mike? I mean, that's kind of where it started.

Michael P. Greco 07:32
Yeah, he came by. And at one point, we're just chatting about it, I really think we can do this. And I said, Well, I've only listened to sports podcasts and interview podcasts and Serial and things like that: true crime. So I don't really know, audio drama. And he gave me five or six. He emailed me a bunch and I just started going through them. And I was instantly hooked on some of them. I came back and said, Yeah, we can do this. If we write something. I know how to edit this stuff. I know how to use it, what actors to get? Let's do it.

W. Keith Tims 08:02
Why don't we talk a little bit about the show itself? What is Strange Air?

Tony Martinez 08:06
Well Strange Air is an audio drama in the science fiction genre. And the basic story is 10 years ago, a man named Malcolm Smith was the host of a call-in radio show about all matters related to the supernatural and the occult and the paranormal. One night in the middle of a live broadcast, he literally vanishes into thin air. No one sees it happen. But one moment, he's there, the next moment, he's gone. And then the podcast picks up 10 years later, when his daughter who is now a film student, makes a documentary about what may or may not have happened to her father, as a way of moving on. Beyond the grief, she's experienced her whole life.

Michael P. Greco 08:46
You know, I think partially also what we wanted to deal with was a little bit on loss and grief and also science. We just touch on a lot of different things that I think that really interested us. And that's essentially who we were writing for initially was what things are we interested in? And these radio call-in shows about the paranormal, like Well, that's very interesting. So we started there.

Tony Martinez 09:09

I don't know if you know the show. Case, but there was a big radio show called coast to coast hosted by Art Bell?

W. Keith Tims 09:15
Art Bell. I sure do. Yeah.

Tony Martinez 09:17
Well, that was the initial spark. I, when I first moved to LA I was literally obsessed with that show. It was the most addictive radio program I've ever heard. And that was the spark. Well, what why can't we do something with that? What if something supernatural happened to a host of a supernatural show?

W. Keith Tims 09:34
In the first episode, we get to meet Malcolm Smith, the host of the radio show. We also get to meet his daughter Chase, who is our protagonist. And by the way, that's a really interesting name Chase chasing down the answer to the mystery. We also get to meet Danny who is Chase's boyfriend...

Tony Martinez 09:53
Played by Mike

Michael P. Greco 09:54
Yeah.

W. Keith Tims 09:54
Danny is a film student as well, who is helping her make the documentary about her father's disappearance. Okay I just have to say this: I picked up this was really interesting to me that there is a kind of a roundabout Laverne and Shirley connection going on with your show.

Michael P. Greco 10:10
Yes, there is!

W. Keith Tims 10:11
In Laverne and Shirley, David L. Lander and Michael McKean played the characters Lenny and Squiggy. Now Natalie L. Lander plays Chase. That's David L. Lander's daughter, and Patrick Fabian, who voices Malcolm was on Better Call Saul with Michael McKean.

Tony Martinez 10:25
I gotta tell you, Keith, that's just serendipity, man. And we didn't plan it when we realized that it was just an amazing thing. Because Natalie is the first person we cast. She's somebody I've known personally for a long time, and she's a very experienced voice actor. And that's, that's a hard role to cast. Because it's not just you want a great actor, but you want someone's going to commit to a lot of sessions. She's literally in the whole thing. And then Michael knew Patrick Fabian, personally, and then he came on second.

W. Keith Tims 10:53
That's great. Yeah. I mean, there's there's no question both of them have a really strong presence in the show. You know, Patrick Fabian's voice is unmistakable.

Tony Martinez 11:01
Yeah, we were very lucky to have them.

Malcolm Smith 11:03
[Begin clip from "Strange Air".] My name is Malcolm Smith, and I welcome each and every one of you. For the next four hours, I will have the honor of being your guide to the unknown, the paranormal, the mysteries behind the veil. On this show, we won't be discussing politics, we won't be discussing the Dodgers or the Lakers, and we won't be discussing the traffic on the 405. Instead, we're going to focus on those strange lights you saw in the night sky. And those scary sounds that seem to be coming from under your bed. There are people out there who feel the world has been drained of mystery. They say the Internet has linked every corner of this planet. And technology has revealed how every magic trick is done. They believe the unknown has become known. Well, I'm not one of those people. I believe those poor souls have lost their ability to experience wander. They no longer see the doors that lead us to a secret world. They have chosen to close their eyes. [End clip.]

Michael P. Greco 11:03
Absolutely.

W. Keith Tims 12:06
Let's talk about Chase who is the protagonist? She's troubled, right? She she was very close to her father. His disappearance traumatized her. She's got problems with drinking. She's going to therapy to deal with the lingering emotional damage that she's suffering. She's kind of obsessed over her father's disappearance, you know, and she's really not very nice to Danny, at times. And her mother, which we don't meet in episode one, but she she appears in the in future episodes, she can be kind of snarky and belligerent sometimes. And it seems to me that her obsession with finding her father kind of damages the relationships with the people around her. This is kind of a challenging character, I think. So talk to me, what are your thoughts about having a protagonist? That is kind of difficult to deal with?

Tony Martinez 12:54
Well, you know, what's interesting, you're hitting on the kind of notes I think a lot of screenwriters get in LA. Whereas the big note every writer hates is make the main character likable, right, I get the validity of that request. But if you start off with a character who's 100% likable, who has no issues, you have nowhere to go, there's no arc to follow. So we intentionally chose to make her you know, as someone who has absolute absolutely having issues and maybe is not very likable, beyond the fact that she's searching for her dad, that gives us somewhere to go that allows us through two seasons and 20 episodes to explore how she changes. We knew she'd be a tough pill to swallow initially, but we're hoping the story takes us along with her.

W. Keith Tims 13:37

I've heard this to the traditional advices you know, what is it a protagonist needs to be-- you get, pick two out of three likeable, competent or proactive. [laughter] But but the more I think about it, and I was reading things about this likability isn't probably overrated. It's not about being likable. It's about being interesting, right?

Michael P. Greco 13:59
That's absolutely true. Yeah.

W. Keith Tims 14:01
And someone who is likable. I mean, who gets along all the time? I mean, if someone gets along all the time, where's the conflict? Right? And what are stories about if they're not about conflict,

Michael P. Greco 14:11
I also don't feel like it rings true. If the main character loves everybody, and everybody loves them. That's not real life. You know, we all have people we don't like and there's plenty of people out there that don't like us. And that's, that's real. So I think you have to explore the reality of that.

Tony Martinez 14:28
If a character is likable from the very beginning, there's a certain artificiality to that, like I just rewatched Casablanca the Humphrey Bogart plays Rick, and Rick is very unlikable. And during the first half hour of that movie, he's a code cynical bastard who doesn't care about anyone except himself. That's the beginning. If that's all you see, besides the fact that Bogart is playing him, there's nothing likable about him. And then the fun is to see how he slowly melts and reveals his inner feelings. So I'm really glad you brought that up, Keith, because we've had a lot of good read views but we've had a few reviewers say, you know, yeah, she's kind of hard to say, like, well, listen. What do you think you want is not what you really want. If you think you want a character who's likable from the first second of the first episode, you're wrong. That's not what you want. You want someone interesting, who you can follow and see grow and change.

W. Keith Tims 15:19
Also, if it was a man, instead of a woman, you wouldn't get nearly the same amount of complaints.

Tony Martinez 15:24
Thank you for saying that. [laughter]

Michael P. Greco 15:26
And there was actually a reviewer that had posted something very similar. They said the same thing like hey, for all of you complaining that, you know, you don't like the main character. Well, what if it was a guy? Would you say the same thing?

W. Keith Tims 15:37
Right? If it was a hard bit noir detective, we would have no problem with it. So I found that the rough edges were believable because of her childhood and what happened and she was so close to her

father, and we find out in in future episodes, she and her father were very, very close. And his mysterious disappearance left a hole in her life that she has never been able to fully deal with and process.

Tony Martinez 15:57
She was 12 years old when it happened. So you know, when you're that young, you repress things that come back to haunt you when you're older.

Danny 16:04
[Begin Clip] Hey, are you coming tonight?

Chase 16:04
Oh, right. What are they showing another boring art film?

Chase 16:08
Did we have plans?

Danny 16:10
Oh my god, you always forget. The film society's screening.

Danny 16:13
Oh, Chase, Chase. It's La Strada and that movie is cinema at its best. Fellini won his first Oscar for directing it.

Chase 16:26
Fellini? Who's Fellini?

Danny 16:29
I can't believe I'm in love with you.

Chase 16:31
Stop. I know who Federico Fellini is. He's Italian, right?

Danny 16:36
Yes, yes, that's correct. He actually made that pizza you're eating. [End clip.]

W. Keith Tims 16:41
The other thing that it's interesting to me about the structure that you guys chose to tell the story and is that you use sort of shifting storytelling styles. The first episode, if you're brand new to the podcast, it sounds like you're going to be listening to an episode of Strange Air, like we're dropped right into the middle of one of Malcolm Smith's podcasts, where we're hearing the podcast as if it were real. And then about five or 10 minutes in do we then break and we realize that this is footage that Chase is playing because she's using it as part of her film. So we shift therefore into sort of a dialogue scene between

Danny and chase. And then we have a third shift later on, which is we get chases, audio diaries, I'm curious as to what your thinking was, when you were shifting styles in this way.

Michael P. Greco 17:26
I think one of the things we were trying to do after listening to a lot of the audio dramas that we enjoyed was to turn it on its ear a little bit and try and tell the story in a slightly different way. So as you said, you know, we drop in first, it's a radio show, and you think, oh, that's what this is, oh, hang on. No, it's a documentary. She's doing a documentary, and then we get cinematic. And I think for us to tell the story. We really wanted to use as many elements, audio wise as we possibly could. And I think that we were trying to have some fun with it and let people take a guess as to what kind of story they were actually listening to.

Tony Martinez 18:06
So I think that's how you hook an audience, right? I mean, you have to sort of surprise them. You think it's one thing? And then it's another.

W. Keith Tims 18:13
Did you have anything specific in mind when you were thinking about these diaries, this these blog entries?

Tony Martinez 18:18
Well, I think at a certain point, you need to hear her inner thoughts. So we were trying to figure out well, how do we do that without being hokey, or having a voiceover? Because the thing is, there's a conceit in podcasting, especially a few years ago, where every fictional podcast you listen to, is someone who is recording a podcast. Right? Right. I mean, Rabbits, is that, Limetown to a degree is that. Well you know what there's nothing more boring than someone talking about the past. Right? So you have to find a way to show the past. It's just an ability to jump back and forth between the past and the present to make Malcolm Smith a real person, not someone his daughter is talking about 10 years later, but somebody you hear who you hear his personality, how he talks to the callers, how he's respectful to people who are calling have crazy theories about Bigfoot and UFOs. So it's a way of making him real, not just someone in her past.

W. Keith Tims 19:11
Yeah, one of the things that the clips you play demonstrates is, is the kind of man that Malcolm Smith was. And one of the reasons why Chase loved him, as she did, I think, yeah, because he is authentic and empathic. He comes across as very caring, which makes his disappearance even stranger. It makes it very hard for us to go, well, he just ran off, you know, or he staged it or something.

Luke 19:37
[Begin Clip.] Oh, hello, and welcome. Hey, thank you for taking my call. I'm a huge fan.

Malcolm Smith 19:42
Well, we seem to have quite a following in the Pacific Northwest.

Luke 19:45
Yeah, well, I'm not surprised is a lot of crazy up here.

Malcolm Smith 19:48
So what's on your mind, Luke?

Luke 19:50
Well, I heard what you said about the dark woods that surround us and that that really hit home. The woods up here are as dark as they come and about a month ago. I went into those woods just to get away from it all, you know. And I got turned around and it was starting to get dark. And I could not find my way out.

Malcolm Smith 20:11
Well, that sounds like a frightening experience.

Luke 20:13
Ah, it was. But, I got lucky. Someone found me.

Malcolm Smith 20:18
And who was that?

Luke 20:20
Bigfoot.

Malcolm Smith 20:21
I'm sorry. Did you say Bigfoot? As in..

Luke 20:26
Yes, yes, he just showed up and offered to show me the way out. I swear to God, I am not lying. He had these, these really kind eyes. And he pointed me in the right direction.

Malcolm Smith 20:40
Like a spirit guide.

Luke 20:42
Exactly. [End clip]

W. Keith Tims 20:43
So one of the things that that doesn't come up in the first episode, but I think it's important we talk about is that as the show continues, you begin to weave themes of faith and belief into the story, we find out that Malcolm had connections with priests and other people of faith. And belief really becomes kind of

at the core of the Strange Air story. It's not just about religion, but also about why people do what they do. What attracted you both to these themes?

Malcolm Smith 21:09
If this was a podcast, just about a girl searching for her last father, it would be really boring, because that's just that's the plot, right? So what's the real theme is when we had to ask ourselves, what what is this really about the idea of faith and what you believe is very important to me, especially in the political climate we currently find ourselves. But also I was born and raised Catholic, I went to Catholic school. I'm not a practicing Catholic anymore. But I was always intrigued by that that idea, what do you believe? Chase is always asking people that what do you think? What do you believe? What do you believe happened?

Michael P. Greco 21:41
You know, for me, it's it's a fascinating look at not just religion, but also UFOs, and aliens and conspiracy theorists. And it's sort of steamrolls into the point of, well, okay, everybody believes something. And they have very strong reasons why they believe in those things. And I think that's just so fascinating to both of us to explore the mindset of, for instance, the professor who has a whole list of reasons why he thinks aliens are real, or why religious people feel their religion is right, or it's it's an interesting mindset to dive into. And it's just fascinating to both of us.

Tony Martinez 22:20
It's also the nature of faith. And and it's not about religion, I mean, faith in general, because faith generally is you believe in something very, very strongly without absolutely any facts to back it up. Right. So there are people in this world who believe Bigfoot is real, right, they can't prove it. They can point to, you know, films and dubious evidence, but they have faith it's real, and nothing you say to them can dissuade them from that. If you listen to Coast to Coast with Art Bell, oh, dear Lord, people would call them with the most insane theories and beliefs, but they really thought they were real. So I thought, a show like this with a woman searching for her father's, or trying to solve her father's disappearance lent itself to that, and it made it more personal for me.

W. Keith Tims 23:02
Yeah, I mean, Chase fervently believes that her father is alive, and she is going to find him like she is absolutely certain of this. And yet, it's been like 10 years since the disappearance. And yet she still holds out this faith that one day, she's going to find him. And I think that does speak to us as humans in the things that we choose to believe in the things that we hang our hopes upon, even in the face of no evidence.

Tony Martinez 23:27
And listen, Keith, that;s a day to day thing. And as someone who started his own podcast, you will understand this, it's when we started doing the podcast, we knew nothing about podcasting, zero, but we really did have faith in ourselves, and the material that we could do it. And that's anything in life, you have faith, something's going to turn out correctly, you have faith, this will resolve itself. I love that. I think that's like the basic essence of life.

W. Keith Tims 23:53
Is there something about this particular story that you wanted to tell at this time? Is there something that speaks to you personally?

Tony Martinez 24:01
it's hard to figure out where a creative spark comes from. It just it felt right. And also, there was a personal element, I suppose, where, you know, we both have lost our fathers at a younger age. And there was an element of that that was very appealing to explore that.

Michael P. Greco 24:17
It was the idea that got us excited. And we had four or five others. And that was the one we just kept coming back to a story about belief about faith and about loss and searching and that it, it just it excited our creative side. And I think that's why we went with it.

W. Keith Tims 24:36
You did say that both of you lost your fathers early. Do you want to talk about that, and maybe how that impacted your creative work.

Tony Martinez 24:45
I was 29 when my dad passed away, and I'm in my 50s now so I was pretty young when it happened. And you know, he was a gentleman in his 50s who probably was very old school smoked too much. You know, not a lot of exercise a lot of stress. He had a heart attack. And I think at the time, it had no deep effect on me as far as I know. But as you get older, you start exploring the thoughts and the feelings and the sense of loss and what could have been, that was always in the back of my mind when we started working on Strange Air. But I don't want to make it sound like you know, I was trying to work on any kind of personal demons, my dad and I had a great relationship. But there is a part of me that had a lot of sympathy for Chase, because I kind of understood the thought of not searching for your father, but trying to understand what happened to your father.

Michael P. Greco 25:32
I'm kind of the same way. And I was very close to my dad, he was he was an actor as well. And so I got a lot of my ability and talent, I think, inherently from him, he had a heart attack one day, and it was very much. I saw him probably three days before he passed away, and I gave him a hug and a kiss and said, I love you. And that was my last memory of my dad. So I can always hold on to that as something that I cherish. And it was, it was funny to me for a while because I had the ability to look at death and loss at the time that I was going through, because I was in my 30s. And it was interesting to kind of view myself from outside myself and watch me go through this rollercoaster of emotions and watch Friends and family come up to me and interact with me, knowing that death affects everybody differently. And, and their own reaction, obviously, was something that happened in their life, to me was very interesting.

And it was something that I actually wrote a lot during that time of just personal stuff that I have saved on a computer somewhere of just how I felt day to day for about six months. Some of the stuff was very interesting as we started writing this, just how you feel about it, and how you feel about death and loss, being an actor and being a writer and someone who observes human nature in that way. I really paid attention to that around the time of my dad's death, because I was just fascinated by human nature at that time.

W. Keith Tims 27:00
This is a mystery story. So what makes a good mystery?

Tony Martinez 27:04
A good mystery, I think is one that makes you try to solve it along with the main character, right? You're listening to chase talking to people, you should be connected with Chase, trying to see how she's responding to the answer she's getting and how you would you think. It's not just wanting to know the ending, it's wanting to get involved in the process of getting to the ending.

Michael P. Greco 27:25
I also really like the stories that if you go back and listen to it again, all the clues are there. You might not actually be able to put a finger on exactly what happened. But if you go back and listen, you go, Oh, I missed that it was two or three lines here in there that really point to something important. But at the time, you don't really know it. And at the end, when you when the mystery is finally revealed and solved for you, you can go back and look and go, Oh, gosh, all the way through. There was an something here something here something here that if you really were paying attention, you probably might have been able to figure it out.

W. Keith Tims 28:03
And the other thing too, is there's their little questions, there are little pieces of information that are intentionally left out that cause the audience just kind of sit up and go, wait, I need to know what this is. There's information you withhold from the audience, or it can be a question that the audience desperately wants answered, and you kind of put off the answer to make them keep on listening and so forth.

Tony Martinez 28:26
Well, I gotta tell you Keith, you really hit on something that's so important there. It's you know, when you're writing, it's just so tempting to explain everything. You want the listener to get it, but you also want the listener to figure things out for him or herself. So you need to leave things out, you need to leave a couple of blank spaces.

W. Keith Tims 28:45
How do you both measure success?

Michael P. Greco 28:47

For me, it's kind of a moving bar, especially with this, this project. As you know, initially, we were just so happy and felt pleased and successful just the day we hit submit on Episode One. We finished every single episode of season one before we even uploaded the first episode, we were done. You know, that felt like a massive bit of success. And then once we started getting more downloads in it, and we realized, Wait, this is more friends than either one of us have. There's other people listening. [laughter] Yeah, that was that was the next bar and then New and Noteworthy was another bar and then season two was another bar. So I think we just kind of keep surprising ourselves. And it feels good.

Tony Martinez 29:31
But yeah, but you know what, I'm going to offer a counterpoint to that because I think for me, it's not about downloads or being spotlighted by Apple or Spotify or any of this noise. Those that's all great stuff. And Mike's right that that defines part of success, but for me, it's like you know, it's a gut feeling, man. It's how do you feel? did I accomplish what I wanted to do? Am I happy with this? Can I sit down six months later and listen to an episode without cringing? Everything Mike said it's true. I'm a business person. I get it. But for me it's more internal.

W. Keith Tims 29:59
Two seasons in the can now, is there something that you've learned about making audio dramas that maybe you didn't know when you got into it that you could share with us?

Michael P. Greco 30:08
One of the things we're actually really paying attention to now. And actually, if you go to our Twitter feed @strangeairpod where every Friday, we're doing a fiction pod Friday tweet of what we learned, because I think we kind of want to give back to everybody that helped us and anybody who's new to just kind of get a tip. One of the most important things I think both of us learned is, we shouldn't have stopped. As soon as we finished season one, we should have written season two. And as soon as we're done with season two, let's go on to the next thing. We kind of took breaks, some of it was was needed. But we look at our timeline now. And we're like, oh, we could we do it? We could we could spend that up. [laughter]

Tony Martinez 30:50
I, you know, I wouldn't change a thing. I would keep every single mistake. Honestly, every mistake we made was gold, because that makes you learn and ...

Michael P. Greco 30:59
True. Very true.

Tony Martinez 31:00
And honestly, this was, Keith, this was such a daunting thing. You know, podcasting. Wait, what's a host? How do you get on Apple? Right? Do I need what kind of microphone and it's absurd how much but the thing is, it's all figure-outable. That's what I call it, it's figure-outable? If you make the effort, and we have the lovely internet to help us, it can be done. So it was such a daunting process. And we were

like, We're never going to pull this off. So I wouldn't change a thing. Everything we learn we're going to use for the next podcast and just grow from there. I think you have to be okay with the mistakes.

W. Keith Tims 31:37
Now that you guys have had the benefit of two seasons, and you've been picked up by Fable and Folly network, how do you feel about this experience from the in the time spent in this space?

Michael P. Greco 31:47
I've loved it really have? You know, Tony and I have been friends for a long time. And we have a great ability to when we're working to not have an ego about it, but also not have any problem with just saying nope, that's that's not a great idea. I don't think that works. This dialogue isn't right. And it does not affect our friendship, we're able to come in, work, do it, be creative, argue about it, and then walk off and have dinner and go to an escape room and have fun. And it's been really, really wonderful. But also to get to know each other on a deeper level of, of what really drives us when we are working. It's been an interesting part of our friendship has been great.

Tony Martinez 32:26
Yeah. And you know, for me, I think it's been life changing, Keith, because I have been on the business side of the entertainment industry for two decades now. Just to do a left turn into a creative project has been great. Just great. And also it's not like I wrote a book or I wrote a screenplay I'm trying to sell. We wrote it. We made it. We put it out there. We did the whole thing beginning, middle and end. It's so great to have that feeling of accomplishment. It's terrific. I love it.

Chase 32:56
[Begin clip.] Daddy, I know you're out there somewhere. People don't just vanish into thin air. And I've got about 10 years worth of questions and anxiety and anger and sadness that we have to talk about. I still miss you. [End clip.]

W. Keith Tims 33:16
The mystery of Malcolm Smith's disappearance is a compelling conceit, supported by strong vocal performances, and an effective simple audio design. But the mystery is all the stronger for the questions the show raises along with it, about the paranormal. About the truths we cling to, and our faith and beliefs about the people in our lives. [Outro music.] You can listen to Strange Air on most major podcast platforms, or see our show notes for more information. The First Episode Of is written and produced by W. Keith Tims. All the opinions expressed in this show belong to the people who expressed them, and not necessarily to anyone else. The theme song is "Mockingbird" by David Mumford. This show is a production of Alien Ghost Robot Creative Media. If you want more information, want to sign up for our newsletter, or are an audio drama creator and would like to be on the show? Visit our website at thefirstepisodeof.com We're happy to be a part of the Audio Drama Lab, a Discord based resource for audio drama development and networking. Check it out at audiodramalab.com. Keep telling stories! It's the only way we're gonna get out of this mess. Until next time.